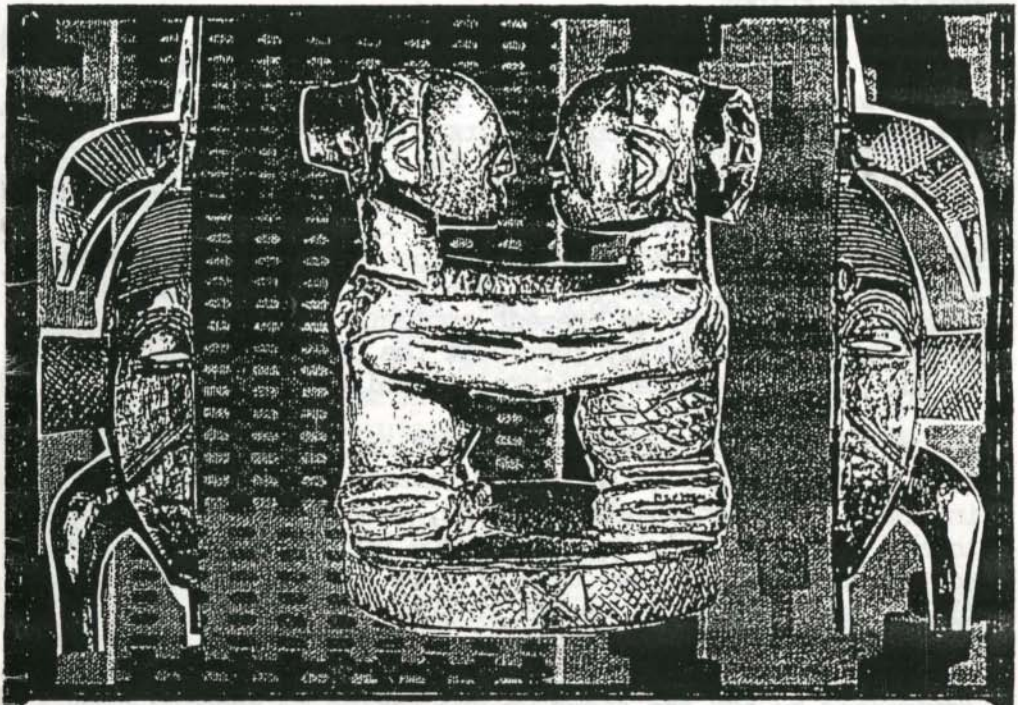
HARAMBEE FLAME

Volume XXII No. 1 January 2001



In This Edition:

Commentary: African Economics in the U.S.: From Doing Much With Less to Doing Less With More; **Community News:** Harambee Afrikan Cultural Org. Kwanzaa Observance; **From Other Sources:** Slave Insurance Bill in Califrnia, Western Hemisphere Land Claims, African-centered Economic Movement, Strategy Session for Conference Against Racism, Harlem Teach-in on Education, Imprisonment; **Publications; Announcements; Back In Time**

EDITORIAL POLICY

The HARAMBEE FLAME is the monthly newsletter of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization(Nebraska State Pen chapter). Ours is a pan-Africanist publication, meaning that we view all people of African descent as one African people, having certain basic interests in common. Also, the HARAMBEE FLAME attempts to be Africentric, in that, through study of the history, cultures, and traditional values of African people, we seek to have and cultivate an African way of looking at things.

The main purposes of the HARAMBEE FLAME are to stimulate and inform. We list "stimulate" first because, more than anything else, we want our readers to be moved to question their/your own ideas, lives, and the circumstances in which we live and to challenge those things that must be challenged in order for us to move from a condition of mental and spiritual servitude and physical dependence upon Caucasian institutions to a state of collective self-determination. Toward this purpose, we present commentaries, poems, etc. These do not necessarily represent the official positions of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization.

The HARAMBEE FLAME provides information because wise people want to know what's going on and because certain kinds of information can stimulate the mind, inspire people to want to act, and influence them to pursue proper understanding so that the actions they take will be as effective as possible. The main vehicle we use to provide information is our "From Other Sources" feature in which we make an effort to provide news about the problems we African people are confronted by and the steps we are taking to resolve them. In this feature, we try to provide coverage of the activities of African people and developments affecting us in the U.S., the nations of Africa, and elsewhere. In "Commentary," we offer analysis of and views about current events and developments.

We encourage you to send your comments, essays, poems, etc. to HARAMBEE FLAME; Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization; P.O. Box 2500; Lincoln, NE.; 68542-2500.

COMMENTARY

In an article entitled "Business and African-Americans Long Tradition of African-Americans in Business, From Slave Entrepreneurs to Leaders of Billion-dollar Corporations," which appears in the Fall 2000 edition of The Black Reporter, both general and specific information and descriptions of African business initiatives are given. For instance, it is mentioned that, during the period of chattel slavery, "A small percentage of slaves...hired their time from their owners and established their own business enterprises. These slaves were usually men working as skilled craftsmen. Some women also hired their time, too, working as market vendors, restaurant owners, and dressmakers."

The article also speaks of Africans in this country who, during the slavery period, were not enslaved and who operated businesses in the areas of specialized crafts and such services as barbering, catering, and tailoring. "Free blacks also owned transportation enterprises, railroad lines, and lake and river steamboats, were mine owners and lumber and coal merchants. They manufactured agricultural machinery, did business as large wholesale and retail merchants and commodity brokers, owned construction companies, developed real estate, and speculated in government bonds and bank stock."

During the era of chattel slavery and, later, Jim Crow, Africans in this country established businesses because we had personal and collective initiative to do so, because we could not rely on Europeans to meet our survivial needs, and for other reasons. And since so few of us had individual or family financial resources adequate to get us started in major business enterprises, we often made use of cooperative investments to fund home buying, establish insurance companies and banks, etc. We set up Mutual Aid Societies to assist African families in crisis.

According to Business and African-Americans..., more than a hundred all- or predominantly-African towns were established in the 1800s. Many of these were self-reliant communities, such as Mound Bayou in Mississippi, which "was founded in 1887 and featured a bank and cottonseed oil mill in addition to its own telephone company."

in addition to its own telephone company."

In short, we made the most of meager resources. Skipping ahead to today, our collective resources are not so meager at all. We have financial wealth we couldn't have imagined thirty years ago. While the European-supremacist system is still in effect in this country, most of the **legal** barriers to our gaining individual and collective prosperity have been removed--thanks to the sacrifices of Africans who marched, who sat down, who committed acts of civil disobedience, who turned other cheeks, who threw molotov cocktails, who got sick and tired of being sick and tired, and those who otherwise fought for our liberation.

Today it is commonplace to hear of individual Africans making mad loot. Securities Pro Newsletter, in listing the 100 wealthiest Africans in the U.S., cites Robert Johnson as having at least a billion dollars from his sale of BET Holdings to Viacom, Inc.; Cathy L. Hughes and her son, Albert Liggins, the largest shareholders in Radio One(a 50-station radio chain) as having more than $400 million in wealth; and others.

In addition to African owners of businesses, there are Africans in the entertainment field(music, movies, sports, etc.) who are raking in money by the truckloads. By 1998, for example, Oprah Winfrey had reportedly amassed nearly $700 billion. There are athletes who have multi-million-dollar pro contracts, as well as endorsement deals. Recently, Venus Williams signed an agreement worth around $400 with Reebok. Who knows how many accountants Tiger Woods requires to keep track of money from his endorsements. Then, of course, there are the Africans in the N.B.A., such as Shaquille O'Neal, Kevin Garnett, Kobe Bryant, et al, who have multi-million-dollar contracts. The rap facet of the music industry has produced a number of practically overnight millionaires.

But when it is considered how unmet our **collective needs** are, the question must be asked: Where is this wealth going? In the eras of chattel slavery and Jim Crow, there was nothing subtle about our oppression. Whether it was shackles and whips, the Ku Klux Klan, "niggers-and-dogs-not-allowed" signs, neighborhood boundaries that we couldn't cross without risking our lives, the reality of European abuse of Africans

was unmistakable. Not many of us harbored delusions about freedom and equality. We helped each other because we had to and because we had a correct sense of being a people under siege.

But, today, our oppression is not as obvious. A business may have a sign on its door reading "equal opportunity employer." But the traditional preference program is still in operation. Europeans prefer to hire Europeans and tend to automatically see Africans and other people of color as "less qualified." Discrimination in housing is illegal. But European-owned lending institutions typically "just happen" to find Europeans' applications for home financing less risky than those made by Africans. Cops do not wear hoods or little Confederate flags on their uniforms. But Amadou Diallo was sent to his grave, Tyisha Miller, George Bibins, et al. In a nut shell, though we are no longer **officially** counted as three-fifths human, the **unclothed** reality is that the U.S. remains an entity that is of, for, and run by Europeans.

These days, however, owing to the less overt character of the European-supremacist system and to an evolving capitalist economics by which some people in the right time and at the right time can get over, many of us are heavily into a **myth** of democracy. Such folks have little or no allegiance to other African people and have the attitude that, if they can get theirs, we can get ours.

So despite the fact that we have much more collective wealth than in the past, we seem to be doing less with it, insofar as our collective needs are concerned. While the historically "black" colleges and universities can't be independent because of dependence on European donors, we have to ask: How many Lexus, Mercedes Benz, Rolls Royce, and/or other luxury cars can an African in the N.B.A. drive at once? With African farmers in the South struggling to retain their land, how many jewels does an African r & b singer or rapper require on his Rolex to keep proper time? In view of the number of small African-owned businesses that remain small because of lack of patronage, how many trips do African professionals need to make to European-owned businesses to assure themselves that they have arrived? As we enter 2001, we would do well to get our house in order and make of this a less spacey odyssey. -Editor

COMMUNITY NEWS

Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization Kwanzaa Observance

We held our Kwanzaa program on the evening of December 30th, a Saturday. We had hoped that holding our program on the weekend would mean that we'd have a substantially better turn-out than we've had in recent years, holding our observance usually on a Tuesday. But it wound up making no difference. Only four folks from the outside African community made it: James Conyers, Chairman of the Black Studies Dept. at U.N.O.; Paul Easterling and Malachi Crawford, students in the dept.; and Vincent Alston, an Omaha-based actor who has played the role of "Malcolm X" in the local production of "The Meeting." To use a variation of a Biblical verse, "Many are called, but few show the hell up." We thank these brothers for joining with us.

Following the libation ceremony and recitation of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization Creed, our Alaga(Chairman) made opening remarks about the meaning and importance of Kwanzaa. The m.c. for the program, Brother D(Charles Douglas), introduced one of our newer members, Zakwani, who addressed us on the Kwanzaa principles and symbols, as other brothers conducted the candle-lighting ceremony and brought the symbols to the ceremonial table. At the conclusion of the lighting of the candles, brothers distributed portions of fruit to the participants, symbolizing the community's sharing in the bringing in of the harvest. Poetry recitations by Vincent Alston and Shaheed Khaleel Biko Hamza brought the formal part of the program to conclusion.

Brother Zakwani

Photo coverage continued on pages 12 and 13

FROM OTHER SOURCES

"Slave Insurance Bill" Takes Effect in California

"A new California State law slated to take effect on January 1, 2001 will compel insurers doing business in California to reveal to what extent they may have been involved in the slave trade. The so-called 'Slave Insurance Bill' aims to force insurance companies to admit whether or not they insured slave holders' slaves in the past, and to what extent this was done. Supporters of this bill hope that it will lend weight to the movement to grant reparations to descendants of slaves, and more fully expose the origins of the wealth of many successful companies today.

"The law was sponsored by Democratic Senator Tom Hayden of Los Angeles...The bill, as finally passed by the state Legislature, seeks no punishment against any corporations that may have had their hands in slavery. Rather, it seeks to simply get them to admit their role as insurers of slaves.

"The original, undiluted bill contended that money paid by insurance companies to slave holders was owed to the family or to descendants of slaves. It would have called for government hearings to determine to what extent Black Americans were owed this back money. Unfortunately, the bill's final version was stripped of these provisions...

"Aetna Inc., the largest insurer in the United States, has admitted its role in insuring slaves in the 19th. century... Aetna was forced to admit it insured slaves when a Black woman in New York discovered slave insurance policies held on her ancestors had been issued by the firm..."

-from "Slave Insurance Law Highlights Role of Modern U.S. Corporations in the Slave Trade," page 23, Dec. 26 THE FINAL CALL(Chicago, IL.)

Gullah/Geechee Sea Island Coalition Selects Queen

"The Gullah/Geechee people of the Sea Islands of the United States have come together in an effort to be recognized as a unique culture nationally and internationally. These people came together as a result of various African ethnic

Western Hemisphere Land Claims

"Her Highness Verdiacee Tiari Washitaw-Turner Goston El-Bey is the 73-year-old empress of the Washitaw de Dugdah-moundyah, one of the oldest indigenous nations to be found anywhere on the earth, say her followers and other reviewers at the United Nations. She reigns over descendants of the Muurs, or Moundbuilders, of the massive ancinet ruins that dart most significant points on the upper and lower parts of what is today called the Americas, the empress explained.

"Invasions from Asia and Europe over recent centuries have uprooted her people from all but 68,888 acres of northern Louisiana, on paper. But her land titles and deeds, although recognized by the U.N., the U.S. government and state of Louisiana as legitimate, nevertheless have no teeth to force property and business owners on Washitaw, La. to pay rent or flee the land.

"And so the empress, like the U.S. Marines, 'is looking for a few good men'. They must reclaim land that her reviving nation can call their own...

"Her effort represents but one of many afoot in the Western Hemisphere to reclaim land by way of litigation in the courts of the invader/settler. Others are buying land and claiming sovereign status within specific frameworks defined by national and international protocols...

"Dr. Malachi Z. York (a.k.a. Amunnubi Raa), leader of the United Nuwaubian Nation of the Moors...leads a community that is based in Eatonton, Ga. He is building a replica of Ancient Egypt there that sits on close to 500 acres, according to Brother Howard Jones (a.k.a. Meduty Khefe-Re). They teach that Nuwaubian is derived from the word Nuwba(Nuba), in Southern Sudan, which would include Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya...

"York described the Olmec civilization, the oldest high culture in the Americas, as 'the original woolly-haired, dark olive-toned people who originally came from Nuwba of South and Central Africa...

"According to Qualla Kuthera Howard, a Black Indian woman who was born on the Qualla reservation in North Carolina,

the U.S. is fighting hard to dissuade groups from reclaiming their sovereignty status and land.

"In a brief telephone interview from Schenectady, N.Y., Howard said only 150 of the 350 indigenous tribes in North America have been recognized and only the Navajo and Iroquois have been granted sovereignty status. In New York state, she said, the Oneida tribe signed a 100-year land lease with the U.S. government that has expired. They are in court because 'Oneida want their land back', she said...

"The empress[El-Bey], who includes in her family the Olmecs, Maya, Aztecs, Garifuna, Arawaks, Caribs and many tribes of North America, said she was granted indigenous status by a U.N. non-governmental organization in 1993. She said she has addressed the world body as empress of the Washitaw. Her claim to the land is based on what she called flaws in the implementation of the infamous Louisiana Purchase. She said the illegal land transfer violated bilateral treaties and international law when her 86,883 acres were included..."

-from "Were Original Americans Black Muurs," page 36, Jan. 4-10 N.Y. AMSTERDAM NEWS

Meeting Held By Representatives of African-Centered Economic Solidarity Movement

"Rev. Al Sharpton convened 50 African-American ministers at the National Action Network on Tuesday to discuss an economic empowerment proposal conceived by a Roman Catholic priest.

"The plan, One Church - One Channel, was introduced by Father George Clements at the Million Family March in Washington, D.C., last October.

"One Church - One Channel is an initiative of the MATAH Network, an African-centered economic solidarity movement with over 10,000 members nationwide. It identifies the products of manufacturers of African descent and makes them widely available to MATAH Network members.

"It is also a company in business to raise the collective consciousness of people who consider themselves 'matah', and redirect their spending for the benefit of people of African descent.

"Ken Bridges, a co-founder of MATAH,...said that African-Americans spend $530 billion annually. Since Black people spend as much as 25 percent of that amount with various retailers and wholesalers, the MATAH Network was established to capture an additional 5 percent by positioning its network business consumers as the 'distribution channel of choice' for people..."

-from "Sharpton Supports MATAH Network," page 7, Dec. 14-20 N.Y. AMSTERDAM NEWS(N.Y., N.Y.)

Strategy Session for Upcoming UN World Conference Against Racism

"A U.S. grassroots non-profit media initiative plans to hold a strategic conference to sensitize Black Americans about the UN World Conference Against Racism scheduled to be held in Durban, South Africa, next August.

"In a news release, the 'Drammeh Institute' announced that the conference would be held at Co-op City in New York on Feb. 10 to promote the Durban meeting...

"The institute said that it would participate in the Durban conference along with several other Non-Governmental Organizations that have over the years maintained 'a strong united front in matters of social justice and human rights for Blacks globally'.

"It explained that the objective of the strategic meeting in New York would be to raise the awareness of Americans who are still not aware of the forthcoming conference. The New York meeting would also be used to raise funds to support NGO representation in South Africa.

"This forum is being developed in co-sponsorship with N'COBRA, The December 12th Movement and Coalition of African American Churches and Community Organizations in Co-op City..."

-from "U.S. Blacks Prepare for Durban Anti-Racism Conference," page 14, Jan. 9 THE FINAL CALL

Harlem Teach-In Addresses Issues of Education, Imprisonment, and Other; Puts Together Action Plan

"'Education Works, Prisons Don't' was the call to action that attracted hundreds of concerned New Yorkers at a Harlem teach-in, sponsored by the United New York chapter of the Black Radical Congress. The teach-in brought together students, parents, teachers, community activists, and leaders from politics, unions and religious institutions...

"On that Friday night, October 27, three hundred people registered for the conference, and attended a 'Town Hall Forum' on "Education and Public Policty', held at the Thurgood Marshall Academy in Harlem. A powerful film produced and directed by Thurgood Marshall high school students was shown, depicting the widespread practices of racial profiling and harassment of youth by the New York Police Department. The film instructed young people how to protect themselves and to assert their legal rights when confronted or arrested by the police.

"The 'Town Hall Forum', chaired by United New York BRC Chair Manning Marable, featured presentations by prominent African-American historian Robin D.J. Kelley, New York City Councilman Bill Perkins...The public exchange focused on a broad range of issues, linking the underfunding of New York's public schools by state government, to the massive expenditures for new prison construction...

"That Saturday, another 180 participants registered to attend thirteen workshops that were coordinated by sponsoring organizations. United New York BRC youth activist Rima Vesely chaired the session on 'Youth Criminalization: Getting Police Out of the Schools', that explored ways of removing armed police from school buildings, and ending the stop-and-frisking of black and Latino youth. Educator and United New York BRC activist Maria Ramos led the workshop on 'Special Education', focusing on New York City Mayor Rudolph

Giuliani's cutbacks on special education and what can be done about them. Other workshop themes covered include: 'The Prison Industrial Complex'; 'Hip Hop and Youth Organizing'; 'Parent Advocacy and Partnerships'; 'The Criminal Justice System and Community-based Organizing'; and 'Public Education or Privatization: A Debate on School Choice'.

"The final plenary on Saturday afternoon was devoted to the theme, 'Building a Mov4ement: Where to go from Here'. Representatives from various workshops held throughout the day presented more than one hundred specific suggestions and proposals around three categories of action: government and public policy, community-based institutions, and political protest and mobilization.

"The conference participants resolved to focus on four central objectives for action for 2001: to campaign to force the next president to sign an executive order outlawing racial profiling; to campaign to defeat New York City Mayor Giuliani's efforts to privatize forty of the city's worst schools; to participate in a broad coalition to overturn the repressive Rockefeller drug laws; and to fight for adequate funding for public schools and reversal of the policies that reduce public education budgets at the expense of prison construction..."

-from "'Education Works, Prisons Don't' Harlem Teach-In Attracts Hundreds For Social Change"; pages 20, 21, and 49; fall THE BLACK REPORTER(Burbank, CA.)

PUBLICATIONS

AFRICAN AMERICAN JAZZ AND RAP: Social and Philosophical Examinations of Black Expressive Behavior, Edited by James L. Conyers, Jr., Chair of the Department of Black Studies at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. This collection of essays offers interdisciplinary study of these musical styles as they relate to black culture in America. The essays are grouped under sections. One examines an Afrocentric approach to understanding jazz and rap; another, the history, culture, performers, instruments, and political role of jazz and rap. There are sections on the expressions of jazz in dance and literature; rap music as art, social

commentary, and commodity; and the future.

McFarland & Company, Publ.
Box 611
Jefferson, N.C. 28640

JOHN HENRIK CLARKE: A Pan-Africanist Thinker, Historian & Poet, Edited by Julius E. Thompson.

Africa World Press
P.O. Box 1892
Trenton, N.J. 08607

****

Kwanzaa Program

Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization Central Committee Members

Front row, left to right: Baruti Okono, Shaheed Khaleel Biko Hamza

Back row, left to right: Damani Ifoma, Brother A (Terrence Alexander), Brother D(Charles Douglas), Rodney Freeman, Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Senegal plans to host the African Regional Conference, Jan. 22-24, 2001, as a prelude to the World Conference Against Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance scheduled to be held in Durban, South Africa from Aug. 31-Sept. 7, 2001. The announcement was made at a Dec. 14 press conference hosted by El Hadj Guisse, rapporteur of the UN human rights sub-committee on the death penalty and secretary general of the international Organization for the Attainment of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. According to Mr. Guisse, the Dakar meeting will analyze the social, political, cultural and religious factors, which generate racism and racial discrimination.

The 2001 Black Seeds "Black Historical and Educational Calendar" is available from Black Seeds, Inc. For information on content, cost, etc., write to: Black Seeds, Inc.; 1217 - 17th. St., Northeast; Washington, D.C. 20002.

Photo: R. Gaither

Larvester Gaither - activist, publisher, and writer - available for speaking engagements. In 1993, Gaither founded "The Gaither Reporter: Chronicling the African American Experience," a bi-monthly publication. It has featured interviews with noted historians, musicians, and cultural workers such as: Amiri Baraka, John Henrik Clarke, Jan Carew, A. Sivanandan, Kalamu ya Salaam, Marimba Ani, Ali Mazrui, Winston James, and numerous others. His writings have appeared in such periodicals as: The Black Scholar, Race & Class, Radical Philosophy Review, Quarterly Black Book Review, and other magazines and journals. Among the topics he might be scheduled to speak on are: "Slavery and Aboli-

tion: Black Resistance, From Africa to the New World"; "Racial Policing, Prisons, and Political Repressions at the End of the Millennium"; "Pan-Africanism in the 21st. Century: Where Do We Go From Here." For information as to having Gaither speak to your community or campus group, write to:
The Gaither Reporter
P.O. Box 262364
Houston, TX. 77207-2364
Or call (713) 491-3526

The Gwendolyn Brooks Center for Black Literature and Creative Writing will have a memorial service honoring the life and works of Gwendolyn Brooks on January 19th. at Chicago State University...There is a permanent memorial for Gwendolyn Brooks Blakely on Legacy.com. Memories, notes, or poems may be sent to: www.legacy.com The fax number is 888-397-3366.

For information about the Gullah/Geechee Sea Island, contact the Gullah/Geechee Sea Island Coalition at (843) 838-1171 or GullGeeCo@aol.com.

The Association to Preserve the Eatonville Community, Inc. will host the 12th Annual Zora Neale Hurston Festival of the Arts and Humanities. The theme is "Poetry," with a four-day event that features a diverse mixture of arts and humanities programming. Some of the poets will include Nikki Giovanni, Amiri and Amini Baraka, Ntozake Shange, with a special tribute to Maya Angelou. Guest vocalist Al Jarreau will perform on Jan. 27. The festival will run from Jan. 25-28. For additional information, call (407) 647-3307.

The Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization will be holding its annual African History program on February 27th. from 5-8 p.m. at the state prison in Lincoln. The organization encourages people from the Omaha-Lincoln area African communities to attend and to make presentations at this program. Contact the organization by writing to P.O. Box 2500; Lincoln, NE.; 68542-2500. Or call 479-3379. Please leave a message.

BACK IN TIME

A single slave, when insured, was insured for as much as $30,000 of today's U.S. dollars. The value of a slave was often determined after something akin to a medical exam took place...

The slaves were judged and their value was affixed after factoring in such attributes as labor power, stamina, size, etc...

The practice of insuring the lives of slaves led, later, to the modern practice of selling life insurance to people in general. Disability insurance, in which the productive power of workers is insured against disabling disasters that could relinquish their ability to work, is similar. Nevertheless, unlike these modern variants of slave insurance, the insurance policies issued by companies like Aetna were legally considered to cover productive property and not an actual human life. Slaves were insured in much the same way a farmer today might insure a tractor or other piece of equipment upon which his profitability depends.

Naturally, the insuring of slaves led to much insurance fraud in which sick or disabled slaves were killed off so that owners might collect on these policies. The Los Angeles Times mentions one such incident when the captain of a slave ship committed the equivalent of insurance fraud when he cast at least 200 slaves with cholera overboard, causing them to drown. He tried to collect insurance on the loss of these slaves, and a long court battle ensued.

Source: Dec. 26, 2000 THE FINAL CALL

HARAMBEE AFRIKAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION CREED

Together we seek to know that which is us, to expand our collective consciousness of who we are and whence we come. We exalt in the fact that Africans are beautiful in our own right, rather than at the expense of any other group of people. And in the true spirit of the Swahili word, "harambee," we promote the idea that cultural awareness is germane to human growth.

NGUZO SABA

Umoja - Unity
Kujichagulia - Self-determination
Ujima - Collective Work and Responsibility
Ujamaa - Cooperative Economics
Nia - Purpose
Kuumba - Creativity
Imani - Faith

HARAMBEE AFRIKAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Alaga(Chairman - Mondo

Eso/Alakoso Asha(Sgt.-at-Arms/Chairman of Cultural Affairs Committee) - Shaheed Khaleel Biko Hamza

Olotu Eko(Education Chairman) - Baruti Okono

Eleto(Administrative Chairman) - Rodney Freeman

Akapo(Treasurer) - Terrence Alexander

Akowe(Secretary) - Damani Ifoma

Akewi(Librarian) - Charles Douglas

HARAMBEE FLAME EDITOR

Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa